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# Letter dated 27 March 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to submit herewith a non-paper, compiled as a courtesy by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations, summarizing the themes and ideas discussed by the participants in the open debate convened on 15 March 2017 on the subject "Trafficking in persons in conflict situations: forced labour, slavery and other similar practices" (see annex).

I am grateful for your contribution to this open debate on such an important topic. We hope that the summary of the ideas and themes discussed in the debate will serve as an aide-memoire in the development of your report, requested by the Security Council in its resolution 2331 (2016), and for Member States and international organizations, as well as a spur to further action to end the scourge of human trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**

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## Annex to the letter dated 27 March 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

## Presidential summary of the open debate of the Security Council held on 15 March 2017 on the subject "Trafficking in persons in conflict situations: forced labour, slavery and other similar practices"

### Introduction

The open debate of the Security Council held on 15 March 2017 on the subject "Trafficking in persons in conflict situations: forced labour, slavery and other similar practices" was convened during the United Kingdom's Presidency of the Council. The debate, which built upon the open debate held under the Presidency of Spain in December 2016 and Council resolution 2331 (2016) of 20 December 2016, was held in order to draw particular attention to the issues of modern slavery and forced labour and the role of organized crime groups in perpetuating slavery during conflict.

Representatives from 65 countries, including 18 at the ministerial level, spoke at the event, alongside 10 speakers from the United Nations and other international organizations. A number of representatives highlighted that, although the institution of slavery had largely been abolished, the abhorrent practice of slavery continued in almost every country as a largely hidden crime. Speakers highlighted the plight of an estimated 46 million people still living in conditions of slavery, including 21 million in situations of forced labour. Addressing the Security Council, the Secretary-General stated: "I wish that I could say that human trafficking is a thing of the past. Unfortunately, that is not the case ... I believe it is our duty to really commit ourselves to do everything to make this a clear priority for all Governments and for all forms of international cooperation". The Secretary-General's leadership role in addressing this issue was welcomed.

In addition to the Secretary-General, the Security Council also heard from a number of experts in the field, including the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Yury Fedotov, the Director of Programmes and Development at the Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre, Ilwad Elman, and the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner of the United Kingdom, Kevin Hyland.

The present summary captures the main themes and ideas for action that emerged from the presentations by the experts and the representatives of Member States and international organizations who spoke during the debate. While it does not represent an endorsement of the ideas presented at the debate, we hope, by recording them, to stimulate discussion and further action. A full record of the debate is available on the website of the Security Council (see S/PV.7898).

### Themes

Numerous speakers referred to the extensive legal frameworks, both international and national, prohibiting slavery, forced labour and trafficking in

persons. At the international level they include: the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children of 2000; the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention of 1930; the Slavery Convention signed at Geneva on 25 September 1926; and the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956. Modern slavery, forced labour and trafficking are also addressed in frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights. Despite such frameworks, however, many speakers noted that implementation and enforcement had been lacking, in particular with regard to prosecution rates and support to victims.

In line with the Security Council mandate, the debate focused on human trafficking, slavery and forced labour in conflict situations. Many speakers highlighted the role played by organized crime groups, armed groups and terrorists in using the chaos and lack of rule of law in areas affected by conflict to exploit people for profit or to strengthen their organizations. This also enables the groups to sustain their criminal, terrorist and combat activities, further undermining international peace and security. These groups are acting within a culture of impunity, and more needs to be done to disrupt and disband them.

The breakdown of law and order in conflict areas makes civilians especially vulnerable to human trafficking and modern slavery, which can take a variety of forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour and forced recruitment. Conflict also opens up new ungoverned routes for migration. The desperation and the lack of protection resulting from displacement also place migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons at risk of human trafficking. The exploitation of such groups in the Sahel and Libya was specifically flagged as egregious examples of abuse.

Many speakers also underlined the need to step up efforts to tackle the illicit financial revenues and flows generated by human trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour. Such profits sustain perpetrators, fuel corruption and can be linked directly and indirectly to trafficking in drugs and weapons, especially in conflict zones.

## Ideas for action

A large number of ideas were put forward to improve efforts to tackle human trafficking, slavery and forced labour. These ideas were split into international and national efforts. As requested by the Security Council in its resolution 2331 (2016), the Secretary-General is due to report, by December 2017, on measures to strengthen action against human trafficking. The aim of the open debate was in part to help to stimulate ideas for that report.

## The international response

1. Given that this set of issues needs a coordinated response across multiple United Nations bodies and mandate holders, the United Nations is encouraged to strengthen coherence. The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons has a key role to play in strengthening this response, and all relevant bodies and agencies are encouraged to participate fully.

2. The fight to end human trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour requires a system-wide approach, involving the private sector, civil society, Member States and international organizations. Alliance 8.7, which has been established to provide just such a multi-stakeholder forum for the sharing of information and best practices, is a valued and welcome contribution.

3. UNODC has a key part to play in its role as guardian of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and in providing technical assistance to Member States. The Council also heard that the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) can provide assistance, including in cooperation with UNODC. The International Labour Organization (ILO), through its mandate on forced labour, was also highlighted as having a role. The key leadership of the International Organization for Migration means that it too has a role, as do other United Nations organizations with relevant mandates, country presence and expertise. States were encouraged to make full use of such support as needed.

4. Peacekeeping operations and humanitarian agencies were encouraged to ensure that their staff are adequately trained to identify risk factors, help to prevent victims of trafficking and modern slavery and, where appropriate, intervene in the interest of protecting civilians. Some Member States suggested that guidelines could be developed to facilitate such training.

5. Ensuring that global business supply chains are free from forced labour and other forms of trafficking and modern slavery is an important element in stemming the financial flows to terrorist and other criminal groups that seek to profit from slavery in conflict.

6. The United Nations was encouraged to ensure that its procurement and supply chains were free of forced labour and other forms of trafficking and that sexual abuse and exploitation by United Nations peacekeepers is prevented and those responsible held to account.

7. Regional processes are a crucial part of the fight against human trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour. The Bali, Addis Ababa, Khartoum, Rabat and Almaty processes were all noted as playing a significant role in coordinating and driving enforcement.

8. A number of speakers highlighted the need for improved data on the topic and flagged the publication of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, prepared by UNODC, as an important tool for enabling the collection and dissemination of relevant and comparable figures, which are critical for understanding the scale of the problem and making progress towards addressing it. Member States were also encouraged to enhance data-collection capacity and information-sharing as a way of promoting cooperation in the fight against all forms of trafficking.

9. The particular vulnerability of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons and the current situation of the 65 million people displaced worldwide prompted several speakers to highlight the important role that global compacts for refugees and for safe, orderly and regular migration could play and, in particular, the thematic consultation in October 2016 on the issue of human trafficking and migration. States also highlighted the need to support refugee-hosting States in providing a safe and dignified place of refuge.

**Member States**

10. Member States were encouraged to ratify and fully implement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children of 2000, the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention of 1930, and the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956.

11. Cooperation among States, particularly on law enforcement, was also encouraged. Given the low rates of prosecution, Member States were encouraged to step up efforts to prosecute crimes of human trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour, to enact, enforce and strengthen legislation that criminalizes all trafficking in persons and to combat and prosecute those responsible, including transnational organized criminal networks. The particular role of transnational organized crime groups should be considered further in the report of the Secretary-General. Victims of such crimes, who should not be criminalized, also need greater support, including rehabilitation.

12. Member States were encouraged to adopt relevant ILO guidelines on business supply chains and to increase the sharing of financial intelligence, with a view to disrupting transnational criminal networks and other groups that engage in human trafficking and modern slavery.

13. A number of speakers highlighted the need to increase the scale of resourcing dedicated to tackling modern slavery, forced labour and trafficking. The representative of the United States of America highlighted a new initiative that aims to raise $1.5 billion to support efforts to end modern slavery. Others mentioned the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. Member States were encouraged to consider increasing their commitments on this set of issues, including through those mechanisms.

14. The need to keep human trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour prominently on the agenda at the United Nations was also highlighted. Given that the issue cuts across all three pillars of the United Nations, it should be considered through all relevant channels, including through the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Human Rights Council, the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as during the week of the high-level debate of the General Assembly.